

RE-ENGAGING OUR JUSTICE INVOLVED YOUTH

WHAT IT TOOK:

From the Justice Involved

Design Team: 7 participants
- 1 Central Office leaders , 2 OYR staff, an MMSD social worker, a county social worker, a detention center teacher, and an assistant principal

65 hours over 6 months - Roughly 20, 3-4-hour working sessions

From the Design Council:

8 members - 2 MMSD Senior Leaders, 2 MMSD Central Office leaders, 2 Student Services member, 1 MMSD Safety and Security staff member, 1 Legal Services staff member

4 hours - 3 design council meetings with design team

From ROCKit:

1 Innovation Strategist to plan, facilitate, and summarize

85 total hours over 6 months

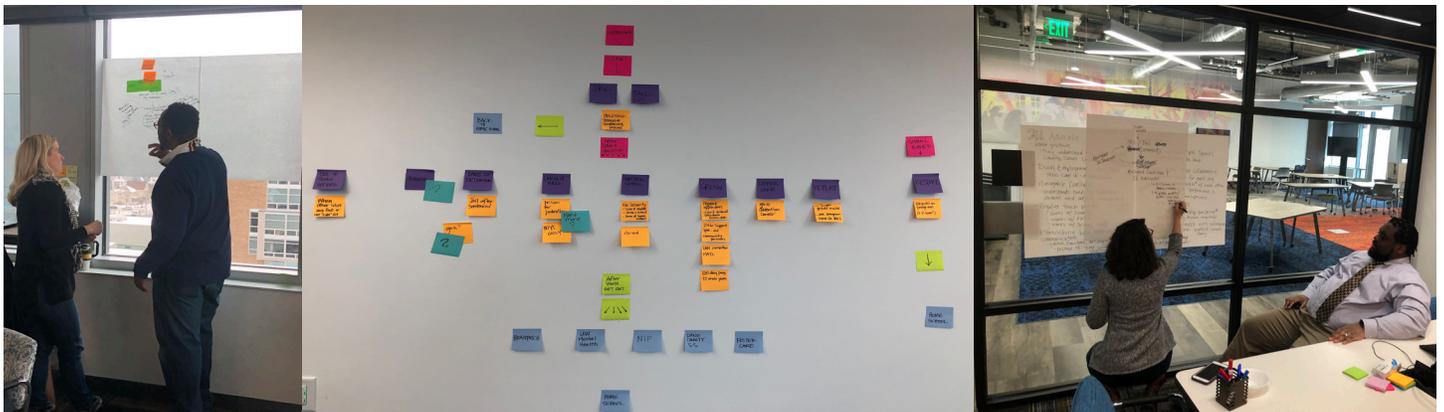
Background & Our Design Challenge

On average each year 150 middle and high school youth in Madison, WI experience some length of time in custody. Due to the complex nature of the justice system and legal barriers that surround it, MMSD has faced many challenges in supporting youth while in custody, in the transition out of custody and back to their home schools, and in the months after they have exited. Youth that are justice involved often find themselves tangled in the vicious justice system cycle.

In December of 2018, the newly formed Office of Youth Reengagement (OYR) teamed up with ROCKit with the goal of finding new, bold opportunities that see, uplift and affirm youth that are justice involved so that they do not re-offend. Over six months the team - made up of OYR staff, a district social worker, a county social worker, a detention center teacher, and an assistant principal - worked on this design mission with ROCKit's innovation strategist Leigh Vierstra.

Research

As the team set out to better serve youth that are justice involved, they first needed a deeper understanding of the justice system. ROCKit used a technique called journey mapping to help the team better understand the intricacies of the justice system. Starting from when a youth is "booked" all the way through to when they are released and return to their home school, the team journey mapped the many ways in which a juvenile can move through the system. This process helped the team gain a deeper understanding of the system, see where the possible pains in the system existed, and better positioned them to do empathy interviews with youth.

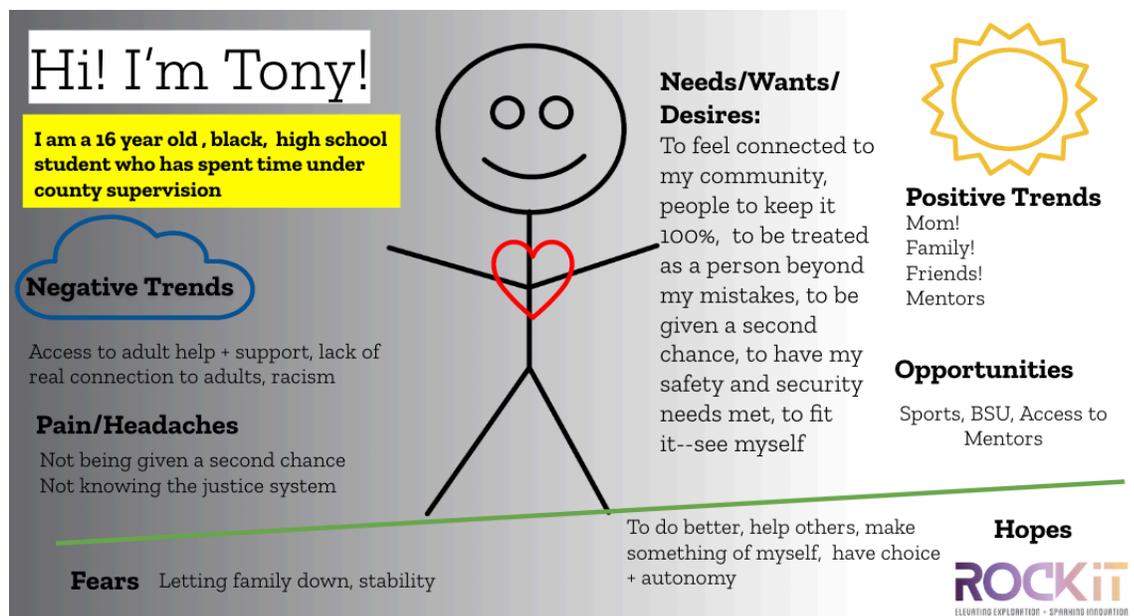


Empathy Inspiration to Insight Generation

The design team took an extremes and mainstreams approach to gaining empathy. The team identified students to interview that were extremes (youth had been in and out of the justice system multiple times) and youth that were mainstream (first time offenders that were formerly and/or currently under supervision for only a short time). Over a two week span the team spoke with 16 different youth.

After two weeks of fieldwork, the team came together to synthesize the data in order to define their client and create a point-of-view statement. The team pulled out important insights from the student interviews and learned that these youth need a way to gain information about the justice system, want adults (especially teachers) to give them a second chance and a fresh start, and desired support in transitioning back to their home school so they could get back on track. Using the client persona canvas, the team then created a point-of-view statement in order to focus and drive ideation.

POINT-OF-VIEW STATEMENT:
Tony, a 16 year-old, black, high school student, who has been involved in the justice system needs a safe + trusting process to gain information and support that values and affirms them in order to give them a fresh start.



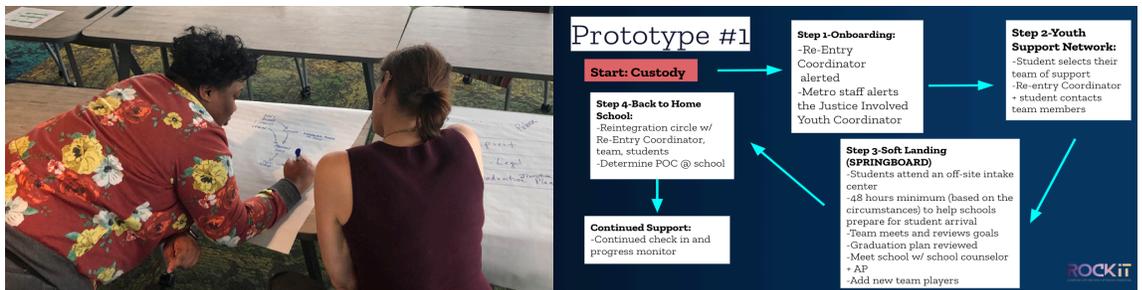
Ideation

Using the point-of-view statement as a guide, the team then brainstormed wild, crazy, and bold ideas to solve for the students needs, wants, and desires. From shoes that would guide you to make good choices to a 2-1-1 number to support 24-7, the team landed on a wrap-around process that incorporated both the positive elements currently in their lives and the students needs/desires. The solution was a support process that began as soon as a student was in custody and continued all the way through their transition back to their home school and beyond. The key components of this process were a Youth Support Network, made up of positive, affirming, and supportive adults identified by the youth to help the youth get back on track and the creation of a “spring board” transition center for students to get support and recalibrate for two to three days before transitioning (back) to their designated home school.

Build, Measure, Learn (Prototyping)

In order to gain valuable feedback on the desirability, feasibility and viability of the new re-engagement process, the team, supported by ROCKit, built a number of small scale prototypes to test out. First, the team tested the desirability of the Youth Support Network component by giving youth a network card to fill out. From this experience, the design team learned that although the youth loved the idea of the Youth Support Network, they struggled to identify more than 2 or 3 trusting, supportive adults in their life to serve on their network. Based on the feedback, the team adjusted the Youth Support Network cards to 2-4 supportive adults.

Next, the team needed to test the feasibility of the Youth Support Network and whether students would be able to contact their network and bring them together in a timely way. This proved to be more challenging for the team due to policies and procedures in the justice system, however, after meeting with the juvenile commissioner the team found appropriate work arounds so that students could make the necessary calls and schedule their network meeting.



Finally, the team set out to test the springboard transition center. Since this component of the prototype was complicated the team worked with and secured the support of the juvenile judge, court commissioner, and the juvenile resource center supervisor. This rough prototype was set to run in the Spring, close to the end of the school year; however, they quickly learned that there are often less students transitioning in and out of custody during the spring and that timing was going to be their greatest roadblock. The courts were able to the Justice Involved Youth Coordinator court date information but until the morning hearing, the team would not know if the youth was being released from custody until that afternoon. Although the team prepared to run their prototype, they ultimately struggled to run a makeshift transition center experience due to the lack of knowledge of if/when a student was going to be released from custody and the short turnaround time (less than 18 hours) to prepare for the students arrival at the transition center. Based on the learnings from their various attempts, the team felt it best to run a semester long transition center in one of the attendance areas in order to measure the desirability, feasibility, and viability of this step in the process.

The Outcome

Over the six months, the design team worked on this mission the team met every two months with their design council, a team of district, county, and city stakeholders, to help them drive the work forward. At the end of May the team presented the new re-engagement process and all of their learnings to the council with the recommendation to continue to test the process more in depth in the fall. Although the design council was excited about the concept of the wrap-around support and transition center, they ultimately decided to pivot in another direction due to funding and the need to train school based staff around the support needs of our youth that are justice involved.